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Sent: Thursday, February 17, 2022 10:07 PM
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Subject: Strategic Report - 2022 02 17

STRATEGIC UPDATES FOR DEPUTY SOLICITOR GENERAL

The information in this report is current to 2022-02-17 at 2200 hours.

Opposition to Public Health Measures

The Toronto and Aylmer Police Services have reported further letters with alleged anti-vaccine and anti-lockdown messaging being sent to officers' home addresses. Previous reporting about this activity was included in the Strategic Update dated January 28, 2022.

ASSESSMENT

Currently, there is no specific, identified threat and monitoring remains attuned to where ideologically motivated extremism may manifest among participants in or supporters of opposition activities.

Freedom Convoy 2022

On February 14, 2022, the federal government invoked the *Emergencies Act* to provide additional powers to handle ongoing blockades and protests against pandemic restrictions. PM Trudeau said the measures will be geographically targeted and time limited. A cabinet declaration of emergency is in effect immediately and must be presented to Parliament within seven days. If either the Commons or the Senate votes against the motion, the emergency declaration will be revoked.

Search and Seizure – Keswick, Ontario

On February 17, 2022, the OPP Provincial Weapons Enforcement Unit executed a search warrant on a residence in Keswick, Ontario in conjunction with CBSA and York Regional Police. The search located edged weapons, firearms, ammunition, a 3D printer and anti-government rhetoric. The suspect was not present at the address at the time of the search and was later arrested by Ottawa Police Service (OPS) in Ottawa.

Ottawa Demonstrations

Police Reporting

Approximately 450 protest vehicles are located in the downtown core.

The OPS arrested 2 male leadership figures associated with the Ottawa convoy protest. One male was arrested on an outstanding warrant and is to be released as jurisdiction is not willing to return. The other male was arrested for mischief as a part of the OPS operations plan and will be held.

The Ottawa Command Post commenced action to prevent access to downtown Ottawa on February 17, 2022 (today). Several ramps from Highway 417 are now closed. Traffic will be able to access the 417 but not exit. OPP is assisting in traffic management.

Following the distribution of notices advising protestors to leave the area, protestors appear to have taken a number of steps to reinforce their positions for anticipated enforcement action. Protestors have organized their tractor-trucks at the intersection of Rideau and Sussex Streets into a defensive position. A large trailer was positioned perpendicularly across Wellington Street at the top of Elgin Street. Vehicles on Nicholas Street were reported to be well entrenched and parked very closely together. OPP observed that the license plates have been removed from approximately 25 per cent of the vehicles on site.

The Hamilton Police Service reports that some members of the Windsor Freedom Group want to travel to Ottawa, but are facing barriers in terms of cost and weather.

The RCMP reported that a supply convoy from Fort McMurray to Ottawa consisting of four vehicles arrived in Winnipeg on the evening of February 16, 2022 (yesterday). The reporting indicates that the convoy is en route to Ottawa with supplies such as food, water, propane tanks and kitchen supplies for the protestors at the blockade.

Greater Sudbury Police Service and North Bay Police Service each advised of a small support convoy heading to Ottawa. The support convoy appears to have originated out-of-province and was located in Sudbury through an open social media page 'Hard Hats for Freedom' which was additionally linked to a private Facebook Group, 'Trades Support Truckers'. This private group has 15,000 members.

Open Source Reporting

In a video posted online featuring a spokeswoman / leadership figure associated with the convoy, she asks her viewers to treat the police and media with respect, and to pray for them because 'they know not what they do'. She also states that it is inevitable that she would be going where there were 'three square meals a day'. Media reporting this evening notes that the spokeswoman has been arrested in Ottawa.

Social media messaging notes callouts for people to go to Ottawa, including one that mentions pulling children out, the use of tear gas, rubber bullets and sonic weapons. The tactic of blasting truck horns to interfere with communication between police officers is advised.

Social media messaging indicates protestors continue to speculate that enforcement action by police is imminent.

A live-streamed video featuring a well-known leadership figure in the convoy protests instructed supporters to stay in their vehicles and not move. The video also speculated that enforcement action was imminent and disputed the jurisdiction of police to remove the protestors. A separate video featuring the same leadership figure further instructed protestors to blow their vehicle horns; it appeared the leadership figure was utilizing a police scanner to monitor emergency service communications.

Toronto Demonstrations ***Police Reporting***

Out of an abundance of caution, Queen's Park Circle remains closed to vehicle traffic. All other road closures have been reopened.

Open Source

A video posted to the Freedom Convoy 2022 group on February 16, 2022 issued "A Call to Action" asking for participants to come to Ottawa to increase support numbers. Alternatively, supporters who cannot travel to Ottawa are encouraged to attend Toronto, and interested individuals are advised they can private message the group to make arrangements. Local actions towards blocking MP's offices and buildings (City Halls) were also encouraged. The message included information on how to interact with police if enforcement should commence (Note: this was posted prior to the OPS Notice to Demonstration Participants being issued).

A counter-protest banner drop action has been organized for Toronto. The group page "#KKKonvoyGoHome" provided the following details: Saturday, February 19, 2022, at 15:00 hours, at the Don Valley Parkway Pedestrian Bridge near (450 Broadview Avenue).

Ports of Entry - Windsor

Police Reporting

Ambassador Bridge is fully open. Canada-bound and US-bound traffic is flowing freely.

Open Source

Information is circulating that the protestors are waiting for the injunction to expire before re-gathering. Windsor PS are looking to extend the injunction.

Ports of Entry – Niagara / Queenston-Lewiston Bridge

Police Reporting

The QEW has been opened at Gilmore Road. No issues were reported.

Unconfirmed social media information from TPS Intelligence identified a potential convoy to take the Queenston, Lewiston Bridge on February 19, 2022.

Ports of Entry – Sarnia

Police Reporting

Highway 402 is open. 26 tractors and 4 quarry trucks remain on a nearby private farm property on Forest Road. 10-12 protestors attended this staging area and left after approximately 1 hour. Protestors were peaceful and not obstructing officers. OPP PLT received contact information and will follow-up with protestors tomorrow.

A small convoy of 7 pickup trucks was spotted in Chatham-Kent area travelling on Hwy 401 EB into Elgin County. OPP PLT has engaged with involved parties. Protestors returned to Chatham-Kent. No issues to report.

OPP reporting indicates that traffic is moving normally at the Blue Water Bridge.

Ports of Entry – Nipigon

Police Reporting

OPP reporting has identified a potential blockade at the Nipigon River Bridge scheduled for February 26, 2022.

Other Potential Activity

OPP reporting indicates that a group of people have travelled to possibly block the border at Pigeon River, and appear to be camping on site. Their intention is unclear.

There have been 7 identified convoys planned in OPP North East Region for February 19 2022: City of Kawartha Lakes, Collingwood, Haliburton Highlands, Northumberland, Peterborough, Huntsville, and Bracebridge. Updates will continue for each as information becomes available.

Open Source Reporting

Unconfirmed social media information is calling for a “railway strike” as part of a “fight for freedom” on February 18, 2022

Social media information indicates that farmers from the Thunder Bay area intend to block bridges and border crossings with 1000 tractors. The message also claims that they are going to a border crossing with 5,000 vehicles, including commercial motor vehicles. The border point is not named: it is possible that Pigeon River is the destination.

Local convoy actions are anticipated in other jurisdictions across the province, please see the updated event schedule for additional information.

Social media information has called for peaceful protests in other jurisdictions that have provided police personnel to Ottawa.

Media reporting indicates that commercial truck drivers in the US are planning to begin their own convoys.

ASSESSMENT

The situation in Ottawa appears tense as protestors anticipate imminent police action. The current information suggests a rift amongst organizers, or between organizers and protestors, and a lack of any plan in the event of police action. Some prominent leadership figures are advocating for cooperation and respect towards the police, while others advocate for resistance and refusal.

Enforcement action could lead to incidents of physical conflict with the police, which have the potential to escalate. The repeated narrative of peaceful protest and refusing to react to provocation suggests that some protestors will likely engage in passive resistance when enforcement begins. However, some protestors appear to believe that any police action against them is illegal and, for this reason, they have the right to defend themselves and each other with physical force if necessary.

The re-supply convoy from Alberta suggests that the protestors continue to enjoy support. There appears to be a faith-based faction within the convoy that is convinced that their actions are right and that the government and police are misguided or malicious. For this reason, it is likely that ideologically-aligned groups and individuals will attempt to go to Ottawa in support of the protestors despite the invocation of the *Emergencies Act* or any enforcement action by police.

The 'Notice to Demonstration Participants' effectively deemed the blockade action unlawful and outlined a number of legal consequences for both participants and supporters. While reactions from participants have ranged from polite to inflammatory, some also reflected elements of sovereign citizen ideology. The presence of this kind of ideologically motivated extremism raises the potential for conflict and presents an officer safety risk. It also suggests some participants believe they are exempt from enforcement actions on private property which could raise the potential for barricaded-persons scenarios. The potential for protest participants to be armed, as well as the availability of heavy equipment, poses a additional public safety risks as some participants may become inspired to act on account of a real or perceived deteriorating position.

Notably, there has been a downturn in social media posts of relevance and it appears fewer protest actions are being shared through open channels. While this could suggest interest in the 'Freedom' movement is waning, there are early indicators that organizers are instead moving to platforms and modes of communication that are outside the reach of law enforcement. A heightened awareness to the possibility that protests and/or actions will erupt elsewhere in the province with a view to overwhelm or strain law enforcement. This potential may increase in light of the recent changes which effectively deem the Ottawa blockade and support to the blockade unlawful.

Police reporting for several days has indicated that the attitude toward police at the Ottawa blockade has become more adversarial and confrontational. The available reporting indicates a growing number of counter protests, including incidents where convoys are physically blocked by individuals or small groups. Such counter protests are likely to continue. These counter protests could increase the threat of conflict at protest sites, and raise the possibility of injury to individuals who place themselves in the way of vehicles.

At this juncture, there is no concrete, specific, or credible threat with regard to the Freedom Convoy protest and Operation BearHug 2.0 activity. However, the possibility that a lone actor or group of individuals could enact a physical threat with little or no warning cannot be excluded.

EVENT SCHEDULE

February 15, 2022 – February 18, 2022

Freedom Convoy 2022 – **Fort McMurray to Ottawa**

February 16, 2022

Hard Hats for Freedom **Sudbury to Arnprior to Ottawa**

February 16, 2022 – February 17, 2022

Trades Support Truckers **Sault Ste. Marie to Arnprior to Ottawa**

U/K number of attendees, departing Sault Ste. Marie to join the Hard Hats for Freedom

February 19, 2022

Alberta Freedom Convoy 2022

Attempting to fill a charter bus to Ottawa

Locations and timing U/K

Pickups in Red Deer, Calgary, Medicine Hat, Swift Current and Regina

Toronto

Possible planned protest at Queens Park at 1200 and counter-protest banner drop on the Don Valley Parkway.

Cornwall

Possible planned protest to take place on February 19, 2022, time U/K

Windsor

Possible planned protest to take place at the Windsor Waterfront.

Niagara Peninsula Convoy 2022

Potential target of is the Peace Bridge/Queenston-Lewiston via slow roll/blockade.

Haldimand- Norfolk

Possible protest at 1030 hours, exact location U/K

Hamilton

Freedom of Choice Rally, estimated 50-200 persons attending

Saturday February 26, 2022

Nipigon Bridge

Protest was scheduled for 13 February has been rescheduled for February 26, 2022

U/K Date

Thunder Bay

Canada Unity – Operation Bearhug Canada

Strategic Border crossing disruptions. Plans unconfirmed.

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